



Friends of Taunton Bay

Newsletter

No. 42

Keeping an eye on the bay

Fall 2011

Department of Marine Resources to Recommend Limited Mussel Dragging in Taunton Bay

As a follow-up to the Taunton Bay Study, the dragging moratorium and the operation of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group, John Sowles, a marine biologist formerly of the Maine Department of Marine Resources has issued a report including recommendations for limiting dragging in Taunton Bay. The Sowles recommendations are presented in a adjacent box on page 2 with the executive summary of the report.

According to Linda Mercer, Director, Bureau of Resource Management of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, "We (DMR) are proposing to allow dragging for mussels and aquaculture only. Anyone who

wishes to drag for mussels would have to submit a plan that demonstrates how they will avoid sensitive areas (maps will be provided on our website of eelgrass and horseshoe crabs), timing of harvest, and quantity to be harvested.

I have spoken with Acting Commissioner Patrick Keliher and he is

supportive of moving ahead with this regulation. Our Regulations

Officer, Laurice Churchill, has prepared the paperwork and will start

the process." Mercer also reported she will let everyone know when a public hearing is scheduled.



Taunton Bay as seen by John Sowles on June 7, 2011 over flight.

The following article is the executive summary of an evaluation by John Sowles of a multi-year project to implement a Comprehensive Resource Management Plan for Taunton Bay. A number of Friends of Taunton Bay members, DMR staffers and others have invested hundreds of hours in meetings, monitoring and research in support of the project and as members of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group. The full report is available at:

<http://www.maine.gov/dmr/council/tauntonbay/finalrptsowles.pdf>

An earlier report describing the process and intent of the project is available at:

<http://www.maine.gov/dmr/council/tauntonbay/index.htm>

Evaluation of a Community Ecosystem-based Natural Resource Management Plan for Taunton Bay, Maine

Prepared by John Sowles for the Maine Department of Marine Resources • June, 2011

Executive Summary

A local ecosystem-based management project was conducted by the Maine Department of Marine Resources to provide lessons on how to balance the often-perceived contradictory use and development of a public resource while maintaining its long term health and protection. The hope was that the Taunton Bay project would inform future decisions regarding community-based, ecosystem-based management and possibly serve as a model for other areas of the coast.

Overall, this project demonstrated that two seemingly mutually exclusive goals; to protect and sustain ecological functions and values while managing marine resources for long-term use and enjoyment, is possible. This was accomplished by deliberate, time consuming and iterative processes of assessment, setting measurable objectives, planning, trial, feedback, and adjustment.

The plan contained management objectives for community governance, marine wildlife, habitat, water quality, and harvested marine resources. Science identified risks and uncertainties, informed decisions and provided a feedback mechanism. Stewardship defined the Taunton Bay community. And adaptive management allowed the plan to move forward amidst uncertainty, but with remedial opportunities assured.

Imperative to this project was the engagement, not just

involvement, of community stakeholders. A citizen Taunton Bay Advisory Group provided local knowledge, expertise, perspective and advice to the State of Maine. Skepticism over each other's motives initially ran high, especially between the two poles of preservation and harvest. Most stakeholders eventually realized that they each cared about and shared a common outcome, and that each was deeply committed to the bay in their own unique way. Eventually, most came to realize that sustainable and responsible use of the marine resources did not necessarily conflict with ecosystem protection and vice versa.

The project concluded that while local ecosystem-based management has many benefits, it is not easily achieved. The process is lengthy, intense and expensive, requiring years of preparatory effort to establish conditions favoring success. Although science is essential, it is the human aspect that is by far the more challenging. Existing culture and perceptions are slow to change.

Despite gaining consensus over long-range goals and agreement that regional ecosystem-based management is preferable to centralized, one size fits all management, the full range of detail and intensity of management practiced by this project was not currently affordable with available State of Maine resources. However, the overall direction of the project is consistent with ecosystem and community based principles and with modification, many components of the project are practicable. As ecosystem-based management evolves, in Maine and elsewhere, the experience gained here may be used to improve and advance ecosystem-based management.

Thank you!

Thanks to all of those Friends of Taunton Bay members and others who volunteered time and expertise in setting up our new facility at Gordon's Wharf. Frank Dorsey and Mary Turner assisted in moving all of the materials to the new site so ably packed by Johanna Bazzolo prior to the move. Special thanks to Rick and Joanne Brown for their dedication to setting up displays, putting up signs and repairing whatever needed repair. Our space looks wonderful and provides direct access to Taunton Bay. We are pleased to be sharing the space with the local staff of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Thanks to Gary Edwards and the crew at the Sullivan town office for their work, advice and assistance with advertising our events.

The report concludes with recommendations:

- to restrict bottom dragging in Taunton Bay to protect sensitive habitats and populations while maintaining access to traditionally harvested fisheries,
- to reinstate authority allowing the Commissioner to promulgate routine technical rules to protect all marine species, and
- for State and Taunton Bay stakeholders to continue to work together toward the goals and objectives of the Taunton Bay Comprehensive Resource Management Plan.

What's Happening on the Bay Members' Meeting and Panel Discussion

By Frank Dorsey

On August 11, forty members and guests had the opportunity to hear an update on the Taunton Bay Education Center's programs and to learn about the Bay from people who are on it every day.

First, Beverly Johnston, Director of Children's Programs, Taunton Bay Education Center briefly described the two family day programs at Gordon's Wharf and the three-day children's camp. Photographs and more detailed descriptions are on the Taunton Bay Education Center pages. Then, Steve Perrin's photographs from his overflight of the Bay to evaluate eel-grass distribution gave attendees an unusual view of the Bay (See pages 4 and 5).

A panel discussion followed among Jim Norris repre-

senting the seven-town Frenchman Bay Clam Committee and oyster aquaculturists Mike and Eric Briggs of Taunton Bay Oyster Company.

The audience appreciated Jim's report about how the Clam Committee was committed to conservation and was pleased that the seven towns had each been willing to support the effort.

A highlight of the evening was Mike's brief video of a bald eagle attacking a mature great blue heron. This led to discussion of concerns that the growing eagle population has depleted several heron and gull rookeries on the bay and has even taken seal pups. Mike and Eric also discussed how soft mud in a channel location and starfish predation south of Burying Island had caused them to shift their bottom grow-out sites further up Taunton Bay and west of Buckskin Island where they were now apparently having excellent results.

New Executive Committee Member - Liz Solet



Hello, my name is Elizabeth Solet, and I am excited to join the Friends of Taunton Bay Executive Committee. My family moved to Sorrento when I was in middle school, and I attended Sumner High School. After graduating in 1989, I left for college and eventually graduate school, and returned in 2009.

I have spent many years learning and teaching about the natural world, and especially the interconnections between humans and the world around us. Horseshoe crabs have always sparked my curiosity, and I helped with studies of them in Taunton Bay in 2002-2006. I have a Bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's in Environmental Studies, with focus in marine ecology and communications. I work at Maine Coast Sea Vegetables in Franklin, combining many loves: for cooking, eating and learning about food, educating about food and nature, and being part of a thriving small business. I am glad to be back in downeast Maine and to contribute to the work of Friends of Taunton Bay.

ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING

By Mary Turner

On Thursday July 14, 2011 the annual members' meeting was held at the Franklin Town Hall. We decided to hold this year's meetings in Franklin since when the information was sent to members and the media we were not certain about the status of our move to the new location in Sullivan. However, in the future our summer meetings will take place at the Gordon Wharf House.

There was a brief business meeting during which last year's minutes were approved and the treasurer's report was discussed. Frank also reported on all the activities planned for the summer: the Friday night lecture series, the children's camp, the family day in connection with Sullivan Daze, and the remaining members' program.

Frank Dorsey will continue as President of the organization and Mary Turner as secretary. Lois Johnson was elected to a new two-year term as Vice-President and Doug Kimmel to a new term as Treasurer. The members at large are Steve Perrin, Steve Sjoberg, Beverly Johnson and Liz Solet.

The conclusion of the business meeting was followed by Steve Perrin's wonderful power point presentation on the **Characterization of Taunton Bay**. Everyone in the audience was treated to a wealth of information about the bay and its resources.

EELGRASS ANNUAL CHECKUP 2011



Photo by Randy Benson

Steve Sjoberg and Steve Perrin ready for take off.

Front Seat Observations

By Steve Perrin

Eelgrass recovery in Taunton Bay since the severe dieback in 2001: Egypt bay, excellent; west of Hatch point, spotty to moderate; southwest of Burying Island, nonexistent; Hog Bay, thin but persistent. That's my eyewitness report from the aerial over-flight Steve Sjoberg and I made from Hancock County Airport via Scenic Flights of Acadia on June 17, 2011.

Usually, I have the pilot fly loops around eelgrass habitat, but on this flight I asked him to make a straight course from Falls Point to Egypt Stream, loop back to Evergreen Point in Sullivan, follow the channel to the head of tide in East Franklin, and return along the channel to Falls Point. The tide was low, wind calm, air hazy. We flew at 1,000 of altitude feet the whole way. We took off at 8:30 a.m. and landed thirty-six minutes later with 141 photos of the bay on the card in my Panasonic Lumix camera.

Along the way, a thin plume of muddy water drew my eye to a clammer and canoe by Hatch Point. Blue mussels lined both edges of the channel between Hatch and Butler Points. Salt marshes on the north shore of Hog Bay appeared emerald green from recent rains. Eelgrass in Egypt Bay reached as far as the Twin Islands (farther north than I'd ever seen it). Clumps of glacial erratic boulders dotted the bay from Hatch Point to Hog Bay, the notable Seal Rocks beloved by harbor seals and those who watch them through binoculars—if not by boaters. The passage from the braided channel leading to

Hog Bay looked even trickier than usual off Dwelley Point and Round Island because of the combination of boulders and shoal waters. Thinking how to describe the double or reversing oxbow in East Franklin, a love seat came to mind.

I made a PowerPoint presentation of the entire flight, and showed an edited selection at the members meeting on August 11th. A few slides from that show accompany this article.

Now I am looking forward to a calm morning in June 2012 when I can get into the air again, probably reverting to my usual looping flight, to see how eelgrass is faring throughout the bay. The Executive Committee feels it is important to watch over the vagaries of eelgrass growth in the bay on an annual basis, so I feel a certain job security in being able to anticipate one thirty-six-minute flight a year. I figure this year's flight was my ninth since 1992.

Rear Seat Observations

By Steve Sjoberg

Most every day, my wife and I hear and see small aircraft flying over our house in Sullivan. The sound of what we assume are scenic charters touring Frenchman Bay and Acadia triggers a desire to see our world from that perspective. On the morning of June 17, I was about to have that experience with my Friends of Taunton Bay colleague, Steve Perrin.

I met Steve and our pilot, Randy Benson, at the tie down for Scenic Flights of Acadia on the Bar Harbor

Road in Trenton. With a sense of urgency to not miss low tide, we were quickly strapped into a Cessna 172 Skyhawk – Steve up front with our pilot and me in the rear seat. Steve was equipped with what looked like a serious camera and clearly knew exactly how he wanted to conduct this annual Taunton Bay checkup. After notifying other air traffic in the area of our intentions, and securing headsets to aid our communication in the cockpit, we took off.

The sensation at the moment our wheels left the ground – a gentle bouncing up and down and side-to-side – was exhilarating. Engine noise and the rush and whistle of the wind signaled our movement as we gained altitude on an easterly heading up Eastern Bay. Randy again used the radio to notify other aircraft of our intended flight path over Taunton Bay. A voice responded on



Photo by Steve Perrin

the radio, saying he was also headed for Taunton Bay and we agreed to remain at different altitudes while sharing the airspace. The voice then said "Is that Steve Perrin aboard?" Randy responded that indeed it was and determined the other pilot was John Sowles, formerly of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, who was also intending to take photographs.

Although the air was hazy, the view was very special. As we turned around Hancock Point and up Sullivan Harbor toward Tidal Falls, the color pallet of the water changed to greens and browns and remained so over the Bay. The dark brown channel was especially clear. Steve started a process of lifting the top-hinged window



Photo by Steve Perrin

on his side of the plane and leaning out with his camera. It was a remarkable performance and effort – one that is not revealed or apparent in the clarity of his photographs.

We proceeded around the Bay. The difference in perspective offered by altitude and movement was seeing the Bay as an island of water surrounded by an endless green land mass stretching to the westerly horizon. This sense of the entire watershed was the difference - and gift - of flight.

Upon return to Hancock County Airport, we landed and taxied to where we began. John Sowles was there already and indicated he had been looking for an image to include as a cover to a report being prepared for the DMR on Taunton Bay natural resource management. That picture is on page one of this newsletter.



Photo by Steve Perrin



Photo by Steve Perrin

TAUNTON BAY EDUCATION CENTER HAPPENINGS

July Lecture Series Features Taunton Bay Neighbors

By Frank Dorsey

Beginning on July 8, 2011 the Taunton Bay Education Center (TBEC) offered four Friday evening lectures at Gordon's Wharf. Each presentation featured captivating photographs and an interesting talk by one of our neighbors on Taunton Bay.

Stephen Eddy, Station Biologist at The Center for **Cooperative Aquaculture Research (CCAR)**, a University of Maine facility on Salmon Farm Road in Franklin discussed the research programs on land-based aquaculture of halibut, cod, sea urchins, nori and marine worms at the largest aquaculture business incubator in the USA, with over 70,000ft² of tank rooms and laboratories on their 25 acre campus.



Photo by Steve Perrin

Family day at Taunton Bay Education Center.

Dan Farrenkopf of **Lunaform**, our neighbor up the hill on Quarry Road, presented the college project that grew into a world-class coastal Maine studio producing beautiful handmade, all weather garden planters and urns, a number of them reminiscent of vessels found in ancient Greek and Roman gardens.

Shep Erhart of **Maine Coast Sea Vegetables** in Franklin discussed sustainable harvest of seaweed. Harvest of seaweeds, particularly in the intertidal zone has generated conflicts among riparian landowners, conservationists, regulators and harvesters. Shep who has lived and harvested seaweed on Taunton Bay for nearly 30 years presented an historical look at successful sustainable harvest elsewhere and in our own Bay.

The series was fascinating and well-attended; so,



Photo by Steve Perrin

Family day at Taunton Bay Education Center.



Photo by Steve Perrin

Family day at Taunton Bay Education Center.

TBEC plans to offer a longer series in 2010, probably every Friday from July 6 through August 24.

Summer 2011 Open House and Family Day at Gordon's Wharf

By Beverly Johnston

The Friends of Taunton Bay celebrated our move to Gordon's Wharf with an Open House on July 16, 2011. A small number of attendees enjoyed the touch tank, displays and refreshments as well as having the opportunity to see our new facility. Everyone enjoyed the view from the deck and most visitors could not resist walking down the wharf to the edge of Taunton Bay.

Our Family Day was held on August 6, 2011 in conjunction with Sullivan Daze. A large crowd attended and particularly enjoyed the owl show put on by Grayson Richmond of Bird's Acre. Steve Perrin showed a power point presentation of his most recent "fly over video" of Taunton Bay and the changes in the eel grass locations. Many of our visitors enjoyed the opportunity to get an aerial view of much of the bay. Owl art activities and bird displays were also well received by attendees. Frank Dorsey also did a knotting demonstration in which several people took part. The Family Day was very successful and provided the opportunity for local residents, long-time summer residents and one-time visitors to discover the new facility.

2011 Summer Mini-Camp for Children

By Beverly Johnston

Due to the move to Gordon's Wharf, the Friends of Taunton Bay hosted just one summer mini-camp session for children on August 2, 3, and 4 entitled "The Wings, Waters, and Wonders of Taunton Bay." Eleven students attended and enjoyed the activities provided. Steve Perrin did a delightful power point about the eagles, herons, small shore birds and seals of Taunton Bay during our first day. On Wednesday, we took the campers and interested parents and grandparents to the College of the Atlantic Natural History Museum where the children got to have a hands-on experience with small sea creatures of our area at the museum's touch tank. We all got to enjoy the displays of the many animals and birds of our area. Then, the children got to put together the skeleton of a minke whale which was a special event for our campers! The trip was made possible with the assistance of the Hancock Grammar School After School Program that provided the bus and driver for us which we deeply appreciate! Our final day of camp was filled with stories about whales, a whale art activity and completing sea and animal puzzles the children enjoyed putting together. The campers were happy to share their thoughts about our field trip and to describe the many reasons for them to love and care for Taunton Bay.



Photo by Steve Perrin

Summer Camp

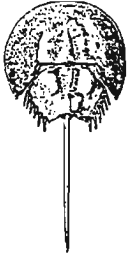
Gary Burr, a Research Physiologist at the **US Department of Agriculture's Cold Water Aquaculture Facility**, co-located with CCAR in Franklin discussed the USDA unit's primary research objective in genetic improvement of Atlantic salmon using a family-based selective breeding program. Burr is studying alternative feed ingredients for Atlantic salmon and Arctic charr with Dr. Rick Barrows. He also works in the selective Atlantic salmon breeding program with Dr. Bill Wolters.

Both Eddy and Burr invited attendees to tour their two facilities. TBEC may offer to organize tours for those interested.



Photo by Steve Perrin

Summer Camp.



Friends of Taunton Bay - Newsletter
P.O. Box 411, Hancock, ME 04640-0411

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TO CONTACT FTB:

207-565-3575
friendsoftauntonbay.org

Editor:

Frank Dorsey

Page Layout:

Ashley Ehrlenbach Johnson



Bald eagle photo by Gerry Montoux. His photos will be available soon on the Friends of Taunton Bay website.